

## Violence and National History Teaching (1948 – 2006): An Institutional Colombian Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

It is possible to track multiple state reforms to secondary education in terms of curricula and syllabus throughout the second half of the twentieth century in Colombia. Underlying each reform, one can identify a rationality that surpasses the logic of Education, and is rather intertwined with the political project and ideological requirements of the government in office, or with certain socio-political junctures. The impact of the political world on education is particularly noticeable in school subjects that address National History. Within this perspective it is shown how, after institutional changes have occurred, different memories and visions about citizenship, democracy, conflict and nation are being promoted. This highlights different ways of subordination of the educational project to a wide universe of political dynamics.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Within the response to questions such as: what does it mean to include national history as part of the school curriculum, what information should be included or excluded and what should be the hourly course load, underlie not only cognitive implications but also a responsibility regarding the legitimization of specific political discourses at the expense of others. Narratives about the past constitute means of control and objects of dispute associated to the establishment of specific social and political structures. In relation to its significant political implications, the school's task aimed at reconstructing national history has been either monitored or set forth by both authoritarian and democratic regimes and has gained special relevance during periods of political transition and transformation [1].

It is a fact that more often than not, school directives reproduce the postures and tensions of a determined historical moment. In this sense, the means and purposes that guide national education, the curricula & guidelines are all sources of controversy inside and out of the academic field.

To a great extent, the State's Educational organization parameters respond to the institutional power's needs for auto-legitimization and self-assurance. In this regard, the school constitutes a privileged scenario for political socialization that would contribute significantly to the constitution and reproduction of the state's union.

However, in a context such as the one determined by Colombia's scenario, where the armed conflict & internal violence issues constitute phenomena that date back a long time ago and have significant visibility, how does one include national history? Is it possible to have a degree of coherence between the story that speaks of national unity and civility and a history of fratricidal violence, when it is precisely this

history the one that argues and constitutes the rupture of this imagined national community that is promoted through schools (Anderson: 2007)? How are the dynamics of violence, its actors and motivations represented? [2]

Official academic authorities, specifically those related to national history, determine the social and political memory as well as specific models of culture & citizenship through the selection of events, actors and processes and through the emphasis of what has been suggested. In this sense, academic programs and curricula grant sense and significance to national development as political options are materialized in an express or implicit manner. School curricula and its establishment in forms of manuals or within the classroom constitute the landmarks of interpreting the past. Furthermore, with the authority embedded in their function and their potential of diffusion – these codes pronounce themselves as points of reference in the construction of a more or less shared conception of the future.

As further development of the previous statements, curricula and guidelines of National History for the social sciences in Colombia -as established by the National Ministry of Education (MEN)<sup>1</sup> - are analyzed through a diachronic perspective. Such guidelines will be understood as political texts; taking into account their source and significance and as the driving sources of specific memories and representations about the country's violence and conflict. In this sense, the purpose is not of an analysis in historiographical or pedagogical terms, but as a part of the political and cultural history in which education is inscribed.

## 2. AN EDUCATION SEEKING TO WITHHOLD THE ENEMY: CONSERVATIVES COME TO POWER

Beyond its precarious implementation, by 1948 the academic model proposed during the period known as The Liberal Republic (1939-1946), which conceives a centralized State, united and secular, has an emphasis on applied sciences that will change radically within the frame of a conservative presidential administration. The 'Bogotazo' will be presented as the trigger for new proposals regarding education. In fact, on April 9th 1948, the most popular presidential candidate, Joge Eliécer Gaitán, was murdered in Bogotá. After his death, a larger number of acts of violence and vandalism were registered throughout the country; government headquarters, religious precincts and properties belonging to politicians were rioter's favorite targets.

The conservative's discourse enounced that the detonator and aggravation of such violence was the manifestation of a crisis related to values and society provoked by the penetration of socialist beliefs within the educational sphere. It was assured that these had been installed within the school system as a product of the displacement of the religious institution from the academy and the lack of resources available for national history, civility and religion courses during the López Pumarejo era. In that regard, the conservative newspaper *El Siglo* (second teaching, July 21st 1951) assured:

*[...] it is within the field of school and university where the conservative party must deeply implement the transformation which the country so urgently needs. For it was there where, with most intensity, the negative influence of the secular education and the slow dosage teachings of Carl Marx were felt. [...] A few months ago, a program of second teachings was designed according to what represents our tradition and to what constitutes Colombian reality regarding this kind of problem [...]. It is within the High School structure where one of the most unforgivable flaws of this new regime resides, and the new style will compensate every mistake made during those 15 years.*

The diagnostics regarding the country's public order situation made by the conservative party and the part played by the educational system as it's savior materialized in 1948's Decree 2388 where it is stated that "teachings on national history are to be changed and intensified". Taking into account this new educational inclination, it is established that the grounds for its implementation are the 'serious events that for the past time have been rattling the Republic, (and) have once more urgently put into manifest that a conscious study of national history and civic practice by every son of the Colombian nation should be of the Government's foremost and absolute care'.

This conservative counter reformation of the educational system begins with a re-evaluation of the place held by the subjects concerning moral and citizenship values. Geography and History are therefore separated, and there is an increase in the intensity of the teachings on civics; it is no longer one course but three. National History is also intensified and its study is now mandatory in every school year. [3]-[6].

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<sup>1</sup> This article includes the conclusions of the first part of the research COLCIENCIAS – IEPRI: *From School: Memories of the Violence in Colombia*, oriented towards the comprehension and teachings of history and the contents related to violence for the period 1948-2008 conformed by the following sections 1) The evolution of schools' study plans and curricula; 2) The violence told through school manuals; 3) Teachings and its multiple responsibilities regarding violence

The guidelines for the teachings and interpretation of the History course being taught in high school are then established by decree; the course must call upon the memory of patriotic achievements and must have a special correlation to civic culture. Through these arrangements, National History is filled with celebrations and practices that re evaluate the 'triumphs' of Colombia; with memories of the founders and practitioners of national heritage, followers of liberty and democracy and of the duties of citizenship towards the motherland [3]. Amongst others, the measures and initiatives executed for this purpose was historical diffusion - supervised by the Colombian Academy of History (ACH)-, the prohibition of non official anthems, the duty to pledge allegiance to the flag, the presence of portraits of historic figures in classrooms and the promotion of civic culture symposiums [7].

Under the mandate of conservative ideals, the conceptions about the motherland and nation - displaced during the Liberal Republic - were once again associated not only to the notion of a *glorious* past but to the founding role held by the catholic church. This is what determines the mandates given by the National Ministry of Education (MEN) led by the current minister of Education, Lucio Pabón, for the course 'Bolivian Lecture', where particular relevance is given to the subjects of "the religious beliefs of the Liberator – and more specifically to the study of the *Relationships between the American States and the Holy See* [8]. For this particular subject, employing an ecclesiastic author, within an academic scenario dominated by authors and editorials linked to the main religious communities present in the nation was suggested.

The vision of social sciences that was imparted in the classroom during the fifties has a double concern: the motherland and morals; they jointly constitute what is considered to be integral education. In this sense, education was to be oriented towards the constitution of a citizen that is patriotic obedient and nationalistic in relation to tradition and the law, a mission for which the knowledge of national Colombian history is essential. However, this refers to a particular kind of history: one that confronts the 'communist threat' and 'social disorder'. Convincing proof of this fact is the instauration of a romantic history that privileges the moment of independence and makes emphasis on the civic dimension that gives continuity to democratic institutionalism and the president's management policies -labeled as heroic- specially those related to the conservative party.

Within this perspective, the origin of violence, traceable to the educational policies and stated in school handbooks, is circumscribed in acts and specific political ideologies (both liberal and communist). Helí Rodríguez, general secretary at the Ministry of Education in 1949, announced:

*(...) one of the causes of the most recent regretful acts – as has been insistently confirmed – has been forgetting the examples of civility, order and legality held by the past, - in truth, Colombian youth knows little about its people and has let itself be convinced by strange theories and political dynamics that alter the essential values of nationality [9].*

Progressively, and as a result of new correlations of force, the stigmatization of liberal policies and ideals as a cause of violence is camouflaged within the political discourse. During the end of the period of the 1950's and among a context of multi-party negotiations, the precarious conditions of education are given more relevance as an argument for the causes of violence; in such that it would be the terrain where subversive foreign ideas would be seeded.

### 3. THE NATIONAL FRONT: EDUCATION FOR COHABITATION AND DEVELOPMENT

For liberal leader Alberto Lleras C. (1958-1962), first president of the National Front<sup>2</sup>, the country's crisis that was manifested by an "uncontrolled political fury", suggested a serious problem not only within the formal scheme of the educational system but also within "the complimentary Colombian educational systems: what was being taught at home as well as moral and religious teachings" [10]. Within this context begins a discussion about an education focused on coexistence and democracy, and an educational and cultural transformation is formulated as one of the political regime's objectives. Even the National Front is presented by Lleras C. as an educational mechanism as it exemplifies, with the peaceful alternation between the liberal and conservative party as heads of state, the politics of hegemony and exclusion that had been put into practice up until then. As was manifested by the Minister of the time, Gonzalo Vargas Rubiano (1960a):

<sup>2</sup> The National Front is known as the period 1958-1962 A time during which, as product of an agreement between the power elites and with the purpose of decreasing the heightened levels of violence associated to the two-party system conflict, it was established that the liberal and conservative parties – and no other political force – would take turns as heads of state and would have parity in terms of public administration.

“The National Front is, above all, in itself, an education campaign that tries to fight against old forms of prejudice, that for many years -more than a century -have driven the country to a scenario of civil war and has caused bloodshed over the motherland” [11]. From this perspective, education would not only resist the violent impulses and influxes but it would also work as a key factor regarding the purpose of an economical development in the sense that “educating means producing producers” [12].

By this time, socioeconomic development is established as the rationality of education, replacing other intentions more related to the subjects of national patriotism or identity. As such, the statements included in Decree 45 – 1962 the educational reform is presented as a result of scientific and cultural progress and of “the country’s need for social and economic development (that) justify a periodic re evaluation of such systems, plans and educational programs”.

Within the context of *Allegiance for Progress*, a North American political program for Latin America, the discourse of economic modernization – a national aim – was materialized in relation to the educational system as a kind of training that had more emphasis on subjects that could be applied or practiced as basis for the preparation of “the new human contingent the country needs (...) to accelerate the process of its development” [12]. At the service of *a new national purpose of self-improvement* during the sixties, the academic plan is divided into two core subjects: one which is basic and another directed towards intensifying and training; the latter oriented towards the performance of productive activities, an initiative that has its clearest expression with the creation of the *National Institutes of Diversified Primary Education – INEM* [13].

In fact the ecclesiastical institution maintains an important influence regarding the educational perspective although it holds a more discrete public profile [14]. At the school level, with the inclusion of the subject of Religion all throughout the upper school program as a mandatory subject and within the contents of the official Colombian History course of 1962, specifically on the subject of *Colombian Cultural Development* (MEN, 1963), the church’s influence is obvious [15]. This subject is dedicated specifically to the Catholic Church as is noted on the list of topics that must be addressed: “The role that the Church plays in the field of culture, relationships between Church and State, Regime of the Patronage and Concordat”. Thus, however subtle its inclusion in the progressive political discourse might be, the binding relationship between national culture and the catholic church is still very palpable within the academic plans and programs.

In this context, as part of the *Analytical programs of social studies and philosophy for the first and second cycles of primary education* of 1962, social studies are described as “moral, spiritual and civic training for students”, subordinating the study of history as a means of teaching values, and leaving aside its quality of a discipline of knowledge. The history that is to be taught is aimed at interpreting the past as a “constant up thrust process” and as a result of the “continuous and collective influence of the most diverse groups and individuals within strong bonds of solidarity” [15]. For the subject of Colombian History, “Cultivating feelings of patriotism/ Sentiment of patriotism”, “evoking the essence of the Colombian soul”, “re establishing the love for the motherland”, and “emphasizing a sense of heroism” were all established as the courses’ objectives.

Teaching *this* history exemplifies a clear civic and evolutionary division built upon the basis of a positive valuation of the country’s destiny and equally conceals multiple conflicts including violence. Although the subject of Human Rights is included, and labeled as a topic that supports democracy, its interpretation and utility is defined as a function of current political times. In a very explicit manner, it is stated that history ought to be studied as “a ground that enables giving value to this political regime over those from the past and present”; a fact that excludes a critical dimension of the Colombian political system amidst the scenario of a cold war. The contents that make up National History tell the story of a country that begins with the Discovery of America (Conquest) and ends with the notion of the concept of motherland in the 1950’s. It is astounding that within these memories neither The Violence<sup>3</sup> nor the labor or land conflicts, nor the political tensions and other social difficulties from the past decade are ever mentioned. Evoking the latest presidents, their main doings and reforms summarizes the country’s latest trajectory.

Another topic, part of the content of the Colombian History subject is that which “Points out/Specifies the motives and circumstances which have determined a joint-party regime, through the history of The Republic” (MEN, 1963); a condition that might be interpreted as an open mechanism of legitimizing the restricted system of democracy of the times [15]. The teachings about coexistence that are promoted by the National Front are not based on a an analysis of a history of violence as its source; instead, the memories of a political and social struggle are silenced by the school system.

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<sup>3</sup> The Violence is known as the period in which there was violent confrontation within the frame of the liberal – conservative dispute in search for power, and the political repression that occurred during the middle of the 20th century. During this time, almost 200,000 lives were lost.

The only content that refers to the conflict or violence, within the Program of the subject of History, is that related to the civil wars of the 19th Century. The interpretative framework suggested is: “presenting the civil wars of the past century as a result of the efforts to re-establish justice; to note/make evident how these have been an obstacle for progress, how peace benefits all and is essential to the country’s progress material and cultural progress, reason why every Colombian is in the duty of preserving it“ [15]. The way in which civil wars are read/interpreted follows a heroic path (to re establish justice) that protects both parties’ actions, even if not stated explicitly. In addition, referring to the negative aspects of the war arguing on behalf of progress, while the social and political impact is ignored. This is the National Front’s functional approach that – at these times – finds the rhetoric around development not only the unifying factor on a political level but also a dissuasive element from the consideration about the destruction and responsibilities that the political parties had during the times of The Violence.

#### 4. THE 80’S. : BETWEEN CONCEALING AND CONFRONTING

Although from the government’s perspective development and productivity were both the motives and legitimating factors related to the direction given to education, in the middle of the 1970’s a new perspective that was slowly introduced, establishes itself during the next decade. Liberal president Alfonso López M.’s Development plan to “Close the Gap” (DNP, 1975), puts education at the service of *social welfare* [16]. In this sense, one of the first objectives appointed to the school system is the respect for life and the human rights as the basis that contribute to individual and social development; the principles that education must respond to stress out a critical and active individual, and the knowledge that schools provide must respond to a social reality and contribute to the solution of current social problems. However, this new direction was not formally established within the school curricula and was neither considered nor modified during the subsequent presidential term in term appointed to Julio César Turbay Ayala (1978-1982).

During the 1980’s, Belisario Betancur C.’s (1982-1986) conservative government considers the need to “educate itself politically” and it is implicitly accepted that the state’s institutions are not the sole owners or axis for politics. It is determined that education and social sciences must “enable a debate around ideas regarding power and the forces that act within and through the institutions, so that the future of citizens is to participate consciously and responsibly in terms of the functioning and development of social, economical, and political structures” [17].

Although democracy is not out into question as a political system, the Colombian model is criticized. During Betancur’s administration (1982-1986) there is an open recognition about the limitations of the country’s democratic system, protected by “objective factors of Violence” (DNP, 1983: 9), that is to say structural flaws that manifest themselves in a violent conflict [18].

The government’s interest in education during this period is based on perceiving it as a factor that contributes to the resolution of violence. The educational emphasis was on improving *the balance of the objective conditions of social progress*, recognized as the means through which to stop the conflict. Along with the purpose of spreading education nationwide, the rationality of its educational politics is oriented towards an education about rights, peace, and democratic principles as the foundation of a new kind of citizen.

The critical citizen acquires a leading role. As the president expressed in an interview published by El País from Spain (May 29 1982): “I will educate my people so it is able to question every injustice it has to put up with”.

Different from the discourse held during the 1960’s, the idea about a *lack or deficiency in education = violence* is relativized by the government as an interpretative frame of the local situation and the ide of the existence of conflicts of different origins and levels is embraced. In other words, in this new model, the education problem is only a component or factor involved in the origins of violence, but it is also its solution.

This perspective is introduced in the academic plans, as the integration of the subjects of history with geography and the deletion of civics. The reforms were argued in the curricular document (MEN, 1984) within an interdisciplinary dimension of social sciences, as the foundation of knowledge and comprehension required by social reality [19]. The social sciences were presented as interpretative sciences and not as truths, and they were put in function of the social transformation that followed a “critical and emancipatory perspective”, one that was in direct contrast with the patriotic truth that had led the path until that time.

In terms of education, this new direction was associated with the peace process that had been put into progress by the national government with the guerrillas M-19 (April 19th Movement) and the FARC (Armed revolutionary forces of Colombia). This is clearly demonstrated in the content of the debates related to the rulings of the reform for the subject of social sciences.

Despite the fact that many critics pertaining to the education field recognized that the *Curricular Renovation* contributed to the generation of critical thinking, they observed that there was still evidence of

measures of patriotic indoctrination and of teachings of “individual justification” [20]. In a context where there is a high index of insurgent violence, the introduction of a decree that determined teaching special subjects such as Education for peace, democracy, social life and a Bolivarian Lecture (Decree 0239 – 1983) was considered a sort of “ideological offensive” against the government and its foundation on traditional conservative ideals [21]. They assured this direction was made obvious with topics such as: “rescuing Christian values, the exaltation of patriotic symbols (the flag, the national emblem and national anthem), reiterating the national identity based on the defense of tradition, the rejection of “foreign ideas” in terms of politics and even on the president’s use of a common popular language” [20].

From the opposite political perspective, the *Curricular Renovation* was rejected by some social spheres and by some conservative politicians because it was considered to have tendencies based on Marxism (the curricular reform and the practices, quoted by CEPECS, 1985) [20]. With this in consideration, President Betancur’s proposal to negotiate with the guerrillas claimed an education of traditional National History in Colombia, as a body of knowledge separate from the social sciences, plus an increase in the number of hours of study per week in order to be able to confront the ideological sphere of subversion:

Now more than ever it is essential to resist the influence of multiple internal and external factors in our nation that threaten the most important values of the national soul. Now more than ever, it is necessary to strengthen the tributes to the motherland, the knowledge and appreciation of national heroes and dignitaries and the importance of knowing the value of the origins of our destiny amongst the children and youth of our nation (El Colombiano Newspaper, Editorial Column, August 19, 1983).

Within this interpretative framework, shared by the Colombian Academy of History (ACH), the curriculum was denounced as a means of inciting the fight against social classes, a “school of hate” [22]. This statement was based on the description of the curricular chapter titled “Colombian Social Reality” (MEN, 1984) which in a very openly manner stated the existence of a “world of the rich”, constituted by a minority that enjoys “the personal goods of a society of consumption”, and of the “world of the poor”, a world of enormous dimensions and condemned to living a constant fight for survival [19]. As an afterword to this conspiracy theory was the fact that “The success that the guerrilla had amongst the youth was due to the latter’s ignorance regarding national history”; and hence proclaimed that “it is important to develop a national campaign for peace and security and to urgently recover the education of Colombian history” [23].

## 5. THE RECOGNITION OF THE SOCIOPOLITICAL CONFLICT IN COLOMBIAN EDUCATION

Although during the 1980’s an updated vision of history and social sciences was officially introduced, it was only in the 1990’s that the MEN (ministry of education) published concrete programs of study for each school level. The Social Sciences program for the fourth year of upper school, published in 1991, is obviously very distant from the romantic perspective and framed explicitly within the reform of the study plans of 1984 as it is proposed to serve as the “Basis for judgment that may analyze the problems that the country is currently facing” [24].

Given that a practical orientation is required to intervene the present and the future, the new guidelines installs recent history in schools and with that, the knowledge about the national conflict. Within the general recommendations it is affirmed that: “We believe that knowing our own reality we may be more free, we will be able to contribute more and be more tolerant and therefore be more democratic and less violent” [24]. Under this rationality, a better and larger diffusion of the knowledge contributes to the instauration of the subjects of differences within society and the terrains for debate and negotiations.

Within the contents established it is acknowledged that the conflict works as a catalyst for history, moving away from the perspectives that ignore its existence, value it negatively or identify it exclusively as acts of violence. Not only contents regarding democracy and peace are included, as was stipulated in the 1980s, but also those related to violence. The constitution of a peaceful society does not originate in the disregard or ignorance of the national complexities, war and violence but instead must emerge from a critical reflection based on them.

At the threshold of the 1990s, the second half of the twentieth century makes part of the school contents, addressed from the point of view of the violence, the sociopolitical struggles and the internal confrontations [24]. During this time, there is an interpretative investment set forth by the MEN as a distinguishing fact: *Colombia: Violence & dictatorship 1946-1957* as subject. In it, besides appointing violence to a specific party, new socioeconomic and structural factors are taken into consideration, and there is the impacts over territory and population are taken into account. Particularly, the subject of land ownership acquires central importance in the *process of violence*. Additionally, the existence of a civil war unaffiliated from to Gustavo Rojas Pinilla’s (1953-1957) dictatorship is expressed. Even if the document doesn’t specify the government that it is referring to, within the political imaginary of that specific period of time, the civil

dictatorship has always been associated to the government of Laureano Gómez. The guidelines given by the MEN regarding the approach that is to be given to this period of time are a criticism of the state's institutionality within the boundaries of The Violence and establish an analytical pathway of violence and of Gómez's administration. This renewed perspective is complimented with the recognition of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán as a new social leader and of his political platform as an object of study.

Such explicit introductions related to the topic of violence and the subject of social sciences is the result of a more acute problem of public order and of the increase of its visibility within the media, as is manifested by the ministry's counselor and curriculum director Campo Elías Burgos (personal interview), one of the authors of the reform of 1984 and 1991. In fact, these innovations take place during a period of high levels of violence in the urban areas related to drug trafficking and during which renowned national political figures were murdered, including three presidential candidates. In this context, schools that have been marginalized from studying the subject of violence by the official instances that determined the curriculum are "obliged" to look into the topic.

Besides suggesting new historical content, the curricular program of 1991 considers a new way of approaching topics that have already been taken into account. From a traditional *encyclopedic* approach of the Declaration of Human Rights, the new dispositions require that their study have a critical point of view related to the confrontation or contrast with the historical reality of the country [24].

The new Political Constitution of 1991 formulated a new project for the population and for the nation that originated in the recognition of its ethnic pluralism, its multicultural character and of the Human Rights as its code of regulations. Amongst the priorities regarding education, the Constitution considered Human Rights, peace and democracy (Article 67) and declared that at every school level both the ruling letter and civics lessons were mandatory topics. This liability was made official in/with the General Law for Education 1994 and subsequently within the decennial plan for education 1996-2005. According to both regulations teaching Human Rights is now mandatory and the educational purposes accentuate a clear political direction in at least six of the three main points: Human Rights and democratic principles, participation, respect towards a legitimate authority, critical study and comprehension of national culture, creation and promotion of a conscience regarding national sovereignty, development of critical abilities in favor of an awareness regarding national conflict and of social and economic development. Given the acknowledgement of multiculturalism and the different realities that involved the development of specific types of knowledge, the law initially allowed for flexibility within the curriculum. However, during Andrés Pastrana's presidency (1998-2002), the MEN established three central themes that had to be addressed by the social sciences. Specifically, topics related to the conflict and violence were included within the idea of the "Subject, Civil Society and State committed to the defense and promotion of human rights and duties as mechanisms aimed at constituting a democracy and at seeking peace" (MEN, 2002<sup>a</sup>: 54), and on a larger scale within the concept of "political and social organizations as structures that channel diverse types of power aimed at facing different needs and transformations" [25].

The social sciences were aimed at achieving peace. It is a perspective towards the future whose standpoint are the Human Right but whose subsidiary is the historical acknowledgement of social, political and economic processes of diverse origins in which violence finds a sense and/or explanation. A definition of Human Rights without a clear context is therefore suggested. With these guidelines of 2002, and not only in relation to the complexities of violence, there is no connection to concrete facts or historical processes. The "handling and comprehension of social complexities" to which social sciences are officially directed is not founded on historical knowledge.

The educational reform for peace issued by Pastrana's government (2002) was eliminated in 2004 during president Alvaro Uribe's mandate (2002-296 and 2006-2010). The new guidelines established by the MEN (2004) consider the complexities of the country's violence in relation to the following issues: the after-effects of April 9th, the analysis of the period of "The Violence" and its relationship to current forms of violence; the explanation of the origins of the guerrilla; paramilitarism and drug trafficking in Colombia, the guerrilla's transformations and the causes and consequences of the population's forced displacement [26]. The study of these topics during the last two years of upper school were aimed at generating the recognition of the fundamental human rights and establishing the student's critical position regarding the peace process, situations of discrimination and acts of violence at the hands of the guerrilla.

Although an analytical guideline aimed at understanding the situation of violence in Colombia is not specified, there is an obvious resonance with Alvaro Uribe's political discourse in two specific points: 1) within the guidelines, the internal armed conflict is not mentioned but instead there is a reference to the "current forms of violence"; in political and military terms, the disregard of an internal armed conflict in the government's politics reveals a specific notion of how it confronts insurgent violence: the decrease of violent activity to terrorist threat is carried out by "a handful of violent people". Additionally, the assertion of the system and of the democratic political regime goes hand in hand with the denial any politics related to the

armed forces. This conception seems to reproduce along the educational guidelines as a disarticulate list made up of guerrilla, paramilitarism and drug trafficking as objects of study; the inclusion of drug trafficking as one of the main actors within the conflict, reinforces the exclusion of the State from this list and the perspective of the conflict from the point of view of criminality. In fact, within the political discourse on Democratic Security, the de-politicization of the conflict is closely related with the omission of the State's implication as its active agent, a State whose power is disputed and put into question. 2) The denial of the armed conflict is imposed by Uribe Velez's government within the school system and from such denial arises a doubtful regard for peace negotiations. This mindset seems to be coherent with the guidelines that enable the student's critical position in terms of the peace process and the different subversive actions and which, at the same time, ignore the possibility of allowing a critical perspective towards war-related and military strategies that are, in fact, the governments' course of action when such academic guidelines are imposed. It is relevant to recall that during both of Uribe Velez's presidential periods the political opposition and the stakes that considered a negotiation as means of ending conflict were stigmatized as pertaining to a "civic guerrilla" or "cagüaneros"; this perspective capitalized the failure and unpopularity of the peace process that took place in San Vicente del Caguán during Pastrana's government.

The current academic guidelines lack a joint perspective and lack the acknowledgment of this violent reality as the backdrop to a more acute problem that has an even greater scope. It isn't established as a historical discourse but instead as a specific and disconnected type of knowledge regarding different aspects of the armed conflict. Furthermore, within this reform, different topics related to pluralism and multiculturalism are also introduced. These are accepted under the parameters that ignoring differences is one of the grounds pertaining to violence, and the norms regulate such differences. While a democratic discourse is outlined in the cultural sphere, the political arena stigmatizes controversy.

## **6. THE INVISIBLE ANGLES OF HISTORY: THINKING CITIZENSHIP BASED ON CONFLICT**

Lessons in history, in terms of its time intensity and the topics related to the conflict that make up its curriculum, hold a close relationship to the sociopolitical scenario of each era; this is the field where the convenience of the topics included in the curriculum is evaluated. With a historical review of educational politics and school curricula one may establish that the transformation of the contents being taught within the domain of social sciences is closely related to the ways in which democracy and citizenship are conceived. Additionally, the importance given to the social sciences is closely related to the way in which the topics of development and democracy are cast during each historical era. In fact, since the 1950s, both are constantly referred to as the main goals of education however much their importance and significance change.

During the 1950s, Colombian history gains great importance as an instrument used to shape citizens within a very unstable political and social scenario. Before the political elite's considerations of the existence of the threat of a revolution, the mission of history within the school system is aimed at constituting a patriotic and obedient citizen. Hence, the history formulated within the curricula refers to the origins of nationality and diminishes or completely ignores current political tensions. From this perspective, the lessons being taught by schools are focused on presidential institutionality as the most important and concrete manifestation of a democratic and republican system.

At the same time, the approach towards democracy and citizenship extends the tension between order and liberty. This is how, within the perspective promoted by conservative ideals through schools, greater importance is given to the citizen's duties whilst their rights are set aside. In addition, there is a recurring and disapproving contrast within the political discourse between order and "licentiousness". In tune with a view of national history that is restored from the perspective of order, conflict and violence are virtually excluded from school programs up until the 1980s. Colombian history plays a part that is exclusively patriotic, that privileges the history of civility as an element of cohesiveness and that considers a variety of political gestures as heroic whilst marginalizing difference and dissent.

During the decades of the sixties and seventies, the political discourse is strategically formulated around the theme of development; it shifts its perspective towards the future as it moves away from the immediate social and political past – a past of "Violence" that was put to an end with the pact of oblivion established by the National Front between power elites. The permanence of civic and moral subjects and the importance given to vocational studies over social studies and history make this discourse evident within a period of romantic patriotic history.

During the 1980's the political openness as well as the peace negotiations with the armed forces introduced a political turn and a way of understanding and dealing with conflict that was evident within the school system and that openly disagreed with earlier decades. Within schools, discourses mostly relevant



within the context of universities were being heard. At the level of middle school, arrives a new way of thinking history: one that acknowledges complexity and hostilities as objects of study.

The critical spirit that characterized the decade of the 1980s would be nuanced by the recognition of the Constitution of 1991 and by an education that was at the service of Human Rights, peace and democracy. This regulatory and pacifist direction was evidenced in the succeeding curricular programs that proposed a strong formation focused on the importance of values and that instilled Human Rights. However, it is a paradox that this resulted in a vague awareness regarding the situations of violence and unsettlement that the country had been through during different historical periods. The discourse of peace is thus isolated from the knowledge about war, the structural factors associated to practices of violence in Colombia and the specific actions of the actors involved - regardless if these were formally organized or not. History is thus voided from the subject of peace; it is more relevant to approach this subject from a behavioral perspective hence recovering the encyclopedic sense of the knowledge about Human Rights. The position taken by the school system went from ignoring the nature and magnitude of the phenomenon of violence in Colombia to its critical acknowledgement. However, this critical appreciation was quickly replaced by one of a more ambiguous nature.

History, perceived as a social process and as a set of events, loses terrain amongst the formation of this type of citizen whose origins are based on a very general acknowledgement about national history, complemented with notions that refer to the Human Rights, conflict resolution and political participation. The loss of the historical dimension of the conflict is partly equivalent to superficiality of judgment or to a sort of presence that is reinforced by a fragmented and fleeting type of knowledge that derives mainly from the media. In this manner, history takes distance from the obedient passive citizen of the 1950s but also from the informed and critical citizen characteristic of the 1980s.

In terms of traditional or modern ideology, the role that national history plays as the object of knowledge within schools, has responded to identity purposes and to the construction of a citizenship devoted to peace. However, it is also about an identity that conceives itself primarily as a triumph before recognizing a process of reflection and construction. Thus, conflict and triumph are obscured, denied, or underestimated as they are considered a threat to the construction of a patriotic sentiment. This identity intends to find grounds on an thoughtless knowledge about a distant heroic kind of history that has a disdain for the debate about a recent history whose present is of troubled character.

Simultaneously, the construction of a citizenship devoted to peace is conceived as the formation of principles, fixed on the notions of morality or the knowledge of the constitution and the Human Rights, whilst the knowledge about the conflict is set aside; its origins, transformations, the illegal armed actors involved, the judicial system, redress processes, etc. It is easy to detect this indifference within the discourses that accompany the guidelines and their importance related to the subjects associated to conflict and violence in Colombia in relation to different kinds of content.

The fear that surrounds the idea of analyzing the conflict within the school system results in a mechanism that favors reducing its transcendence and the disdain surrounding the recognition of particular impacts and responsibilities. There must be a preference for recognizing the conflict within the discourse of national history from a perspective that incorporates the memories of the actors involved –however opposing - but that also surpasses a condemnatory view of the latter in favor of a critical reflection of our construction as a Nation–State. From the conception of the school as the grounds where the conflict can be acknowledged, negotiated and transformed emerges the possibility of a reflexive citizen that is based on historical knowledge rather than on critical junctures.

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